

## UKRAINE: Russia's colonial expedition accelerates the course to world war

*Beijing takes the side of Moscow. Washington revitalises NATO. European capitals in disarray despite their appearance of unity. Only the international proletariat, including in Russia, and above all in Ukraine, can resist the Russian invasion by overturning its state and by giving itself its own political weapons to destroy the two states in conflict and to fight against the system founded on exploitation and oppression.*

The threats of the Moscow dictator have become a fact. The black army of Russia has launched a colonial expedition against Ukraine, having previously amputated parts of two eastern provinces, Donetsk and Lugansk, transformed into de facto protectorates, and purely and simply annexed the peninsula of Crimea. The Ukrainian army does not have the means or the will to face down the army of occupation for a prolonged period. The government in Kyiv has called for the general arming of the population largely to compensate for its fragility and the weakness of its armed forces. The demand to open direct unconditional negotiations from Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, addressed to Vladimir Putin after only two days of fighting said a great deal about the effectiveness of the Kyiv armed forces. The perspective of a capitulation of the Ukrainian state seemed very concrete. The immediate principal objective of Moscow to create a phantom state which will push back to the West the East European frontiers of the former Stalinist Empire may still be within reach. The de facto annexation of Belarus, whose government had been seriously shaken by the democracy movement and by strikes in 2020 and 2021, is part of this same plan. By means of the Ukrainian expedition Putin also aims at total control of the Azov Sea, an area strategically vital for his country's Navy, taking the pressure off Sebastopol, giving him complete control of access to the Black Sea and, by that, the Mediterranean. And let's not forget the Caspian Sea-Black Sea connection via the Don-Volga Canal. It is part of the long-term plan of Moscow expressed in wars in Moldova in 1991 (supporting the separatists of Transnistria), Chechnya in 1994, Georgia in 2008 (recognition of the sov-

ereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia), Crimea (annexed in 2014), Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 (so-called peace-keeping forces), Kazakhstan at the start of 2022<sup>1</sup>. Will the Moscow regime stop there? Nothing is less certain. It can scarcely be excluded that the Russian colonialist project might aim at the Baltic States next. Russia possesses the Kaliningrad enclave, a region situated between Poland and Lithuania but geographically isolated from the rest of Russia. This territory hosts the main naval base in the Baltics. Moscow could thus try to open a land corridor by force towards its closest frontier zones. For the Muscovite despot, it is crucial to demonstrate his influence in the Baltic Sea, a key zone for international trade whose depths contain the gas pipeline Nord Stream 2. The Baltic Sea is also a thorn in the side of Russia, particularly after the constitution, in 2015, of the *Joint Expeditionary Force* (JEF) led by Britain. Making up the JEF are Denmark, the Netherlands, the Baltic States and Norway, to which were added Sweden and Finland in 2017 and, in 2021, Iceland. The pivotal role on the geostrategic level of the UK in this region was confirmed and amplified by the rise of the JEF.

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<sup>1</sup> See: "KAZAKHSTAN: The democratic movement stands on the shoulders of the insurrectional movement of the proletariat", Bulletin no. 21: <https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Leaflets/BLT2201ENvF.pdf>

This military alliance is an essential complement to the deployment of NATO in this region because of the undeniable offensive capabilities of the main armies it is made up of. It has showed itself to be the most aggressive towards Moscow in the phase of preparation for the invasion of Ukraine. Following the example of the US, none of the countries of the JEF are heavily dependent on Russia for trade. It's notable that Moscow has deplored Sweden's remilitarisation of Gotland, a strategic island right in the middle of the Baltic Sea.

1. The annexation of eastern Ukraine by Moscow allowed Washington to complete the foreign policy turn taken by President Biden after the isolationism of the Trump era. The new Washington geostrategic doctrine centres on containing Chinese imperial expansionism. Beijing has made no secret of its desire to annex Taiwan after having completed that of Hong Kong. American imperialism is in the process of consolidating its front of allies in case of major conflict with Beijing in the South China Sea. The first essential step was in mid-September 2021, with the constitution of the AUKUS (*Australia, United Kingdom and United States*) military alliance. The pact between these three countries claims the support of Japan and South Korea and, not so much yet, India. India participates, with Japan, Australia and the US, in the structure called the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. NATO, which Emmanuel Macron prematurely described as "brain dead" in early November 2021, finds itself reinforced on its East European border thanks to Russia's attack on Ukraine. NATO has noticeably beefed up its presence in the Baltics, in Poland and in Romania.

2. As for the European Union, it has shown its usual lines of fracture which prevent it from acting as a single entity, despite the beginnings of a common "foreign policy" towards Ukraine. Pressed by the US, Germany, with its close links to Russia (principal customer for Russian natural gas; second exporter to Russia after China; partly reliant on Russian coal for electricity), has had to freeze the opening of the Gazprom gas pipeline Nord Stream 2. But, like all the other European countries, Berlin has hardly stopped importing Russian natural gas at all, nor its main exports to the country. Putin

has reassured the European clients of Gazprom that deliveries will continue without a hitch... provided that the receiving countries persist in blocking NATO membership for Ukraine and avoid sending it real offensive weapons (fighter planes, ground-to-air missiles etc.). As a powerful means of persuasion, Gazprom has, since November 2021, reduced European deliveries by a third. In February 2022, Russian exports of gas to the EU were less than 2 billion m<sup>3</sup>, against almost 3.2 billion m<sup>3</sup> a year earlier. The choice to attack Ukraine at this time of year is not by chance: in winter the stocks are at their lowest. The power of the gas tap has limited the Western sanctions inflicted on Russian interests. Their effects are "minimal", claimed the press agency *Reuters*. Not so for the exclusion of Russian banking institutions from Swift, the secure system for exchanging financial information which is indispensable for making international payments. Moscow meticulously prepared for the war with its currency reserves of \$640 billion. The Russian Central Bank also created, starting in 2014, its own international system of card payment, Mir. Its cards can be used in Abkhazia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, South Ossetia, Uzbekistan and Turkey. This initiative was accompanied by the creation, also in 2014, of the payment network, System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPSF). In 2021 this connected more than 400 financial institutions, including Deutsche Bank, Société Générale and UniCredit. This system covers around a fifth of Russian transactions. And if the Russian banks were disconnected from SWIFT, they could count on the Chinese Cross-Border Inter-Bank Payments System (CIPS), catering for users from more than a hundred countries and run by the People's Bank of China (the Chinese Central Bank). If seriously hindered by expulsion from Swift, the financial transactions and commercial trade of Russia could be pursued via sophisticated systems of barter organised by third parties, traders in raw materials above all. The two main global groups of traders in mineral and agricultural resources, the Swiss companies Glencore and Trafigura, have solid relations with the Russian producers of raw materials along with the oligarchs closest to the regime, including Oleg Deripaska.

3. This is the boss of the world leader in aluminium production Rusal, who was personally involved in getting Trump elected President.

The European countries do not intend to reduce or penalise their Russian oil and gas imports very much. Thus, the fate of Nord Stream 2 is far from being jeopardised, experts consider. This gas pipeline is controlled by Gazprom but has been abundantly financed by the big European energy groups: the French Engie, Dutch Shell, Austrian OMV, German E.ON, Uniper, Wintershall and BASF. There is no question for these giants of the sector and their respective states seeing their investments go up in smoke.

4. The self-interested state “pacifism” of the customer countries and exporters is not only expressed in Germany. The Italy of Mario Draghi is also one of the softer critics of Putin notably because of its strong dependence on Russian gas. The government majority which props up the former boss of the ECB is mostly composed of parties friendly to the Moscow dictatorship: *Movimento 5 Stelle*; the *Lega* of the Premier *Salvini*; the *Forza Italia* of Berlusconi, a personal friend of the Russian butcher; LEU, the mini-party descended from the PCI, and the “left” wing of the Democratic Party, founded by Romano Prodi and Massimo D’Alema. Some of these formations are suspected of having got a lot of money from Russia. The Hungary of Viktor Orbán has adopted comparable positions to Italy. The Poland of Jarosław Kaczyński, initially aligned with Italy and Hungary, has changed position by demanding exemplary sanctions against Russia and moving closer to the Baltic States. As for France, it has attempted an update of the Gaullist policy of diplomatic autonomy towards the two blocs. A waste of time: Putin led the French President up the garden path with endless phone calls, giving the illusion that French diplomacy was playing a leading geostrategic role. Result: Paris suffered a third significant setback in a few months, after the exclusion from AUKUS and the announcement of the withdrawal from Mali. After these defeats, Emmanuel Macron saw his chances of creating a European defence force built around the French Army evaporate.

5. Behind the feeble calls for peace and the half-hearted condemnations of the invasion of Ukraine, the international sovereigntist partisans of plebiscitary democracy<sup>2</sup> act as a Putinist Fifth Column by more or less explicitly attributing responsibility for the war to NATO aggression. The British Conservatives who oppose Boris Johnson and the friends of Nigel Farage, the fascists of the *Fratelli d’Italia*, the *Lega* of Salvini, the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, the *Vlaams Belang*, the *Rassemblement national* of Marine Le Pen, *Reconquête!* of Éric Zemmour, Vox in Spain etc. have all chosen to keep a low profile so as not to upset their Russian backers. These parties generally classified as far-right share this analysis with the demo-plebiscitary sovereigntists of the “left”, such as *France insoumise* and the French CP, *Rifondazione* and *Potere al Popolo* in Italy, the PTB in Belgium, the KKE in Greece, *Die Linke* in Germany, and Jeremy Corbyn and the Stop the War Coalition in Britain. But these Putin fiends always forget to call for the dissolution of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO); the “Russian NATO” descended from the Warsaw Pact which groups Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan around Russia. It intervened in Kazakhstan at the beginning of 2022 to drown the attempted proletarian insurrection in blood. Nostalgic in various ways for the Russian “workers’ state”, Stalinists, Maoists and Trotskyists thus find themselves once again on the side of Muscovite colonialism.

6. For its part, China has strengthened its links with Russia by de facto underwriting its colonial expedition to Ukraine as it did shortly before in Kazakhstan. In the “*Joint declaration of the Russian Federation and the Peoples Republic of China on international relations who enter into a new era and durable world development*” signed in the Chinese capital, on 4 February 2022, between Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, we can read: “*The parties reaffirm that the new inter-state relations between Russia and China are superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War. Friendship between*

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<sup>2</sup> See: “The Crisis of Political Liberalism”: [https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/WorkDocuments/DT10\\_Crise%20Dem\\_EN\\_%20Complete%20vF.pdf](https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/WorkDocuments/DT10_Crise%20Dem_EN_%20Complete%20vF.pdf)

*the two states has no limits, there are no "forbidden" domains of cooperation" ... Translation: the military alliance between the two countries is part of their respective plans. Xi obtained the anticipated agreement of Putin to his plan to annex Taiwan: "The Russian party reaffirms its support to the principle of one China, confirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and is opposed to any form of independence for Taiwan". And Putin got his green light for the occupation of Ukraine: "The parties are opposed to a new enlargement of NATO... Russia and China oppose attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in their common adjacent regions, have the intention of countering the interference of external forces in the internal affairs of sovereign countries under any pretext, oppose colour revolutions and reinforce cooperation in the above-mentioned domains."*

7. While intoning its mantra of non-interference in the affairs of third countries, Beijing objects to the term "invasion" to describe the aggression in Ukraine and opposes all sanctions against Moscow. The visit by Putin to Xi, in early February 2022, on the fringes of the Winter Olympic Games was marked by the signing of a contract running for 25 years for Gazprom to supply an additional 10 billion m<sup>3</sup> of gas per year to China, main consumer of natural gas in the world, at 331 billion m<sup>3</sup> per year. This contract followed that signed in 2014 for 38 billion m<sup>3</sup> per year also carried by Gazprom via its eastern pipeline Power of Siberia. Gazprom is presently the third largest provider of natural gas to China. Its declared objective is to deliver 50 billion m<sup>3</sup> per year to Beijing. Russia also intends to considerably expand its deliveries of oil to Beijing. Rosneft is committed to growing its exports of this black gold to China via Kazakhstan by 200,000 barrels per day – thus reaching 1.2 million barrels per day. Russia is the second supplier of oil to China, behind Saudi Arabia. Beyond solid economic reasons, Beijing counts on Moscow to achieve its plan of annexing Taiwan. That was all it took for China to let go of Ukraine, to which it is linked by strong trade relations. The \$15 billion a year in bilateral trade and Kyiv's participation in China's Belt and Road initiative are of little consequence in the face of geostrategic reasons and access to Russian sources of energy and other mineral raw materials. However, Xi does not want to

show total alignment with Putin, in an attempt to preserve normalised trade relations with the EU countries, led by Germany. China is also very interested in the EU adopting a foreign policy distinct from that of the United States, as this could prove useful in its plans for Taiwan.

8. After this short and certainly non-exhaustive review of the forces at work, it is clear that Ukraine cannot expect anything from its Western "friends" and the "international community". The Russian occupying forces will not be stopped by NATO, and the annexation of the eastern part of the country is almost certain. The Butcher of Moscow's bayonet and power diplomacy has reached an important point. China is consolidating its alliance with Russia. The Russian scarecrow also benefits the United States, which is reorganising its global sphere of influence. NATO is being "reborn" and indirectly encompasses the JEF, European defence is being agonised over before it even exists, and the European Union disunity continues. The attempt to stigmatise only Moscow is strong, after Putin's recent expeditions in Syria, Libya and sub-Saharan Africa. Russian aggressiveness is a consequence of its continuing weakness after the collapse of Stalinist imperialism in 1991. Moscow no longer has any possibility of recreating an empire comparable to Stalin's. The country's recent capitalist development is essentially based on the export of oil and gas and mineral raw materials. Its geopolitical "power" is based solely on its repeated military engagements and its repeated threats to use nuclear weapons. The expedition to Ukraine and the strengthening of diplomatic and military ties with China can be explained in this way. But Russia is not the warlike monster that threatens a peaceful world. The race to global war has already been started by several leading countries, including those with a "peaceful" profile. Quite simply, Russia is shooting first to overcome its structural weaknesses. The war in Ukraine has no immediate economic "rationale". It is, however, a direct, albeit delayed, product of the collapse of the Stalinist Empire and its system of political and economic domination.

9. The downgrading of Russia to a country capable of colonial military action but second rate in terms of capital accumulation is the basis of the warlike activities of the Moscow regime.

10. Once this framework is outlined, what is crucial for communists is that the proletariat is subjected to a veritable bombardment of bellicose patriotic propaganda. It's a propaganda which, for the moment, strengthens Putin, credited with 69% of positive opinions by a poll of the independent institute Levada Centre, published on 18 February, just before the Ukrainian expedition. For its part, the executive in Kyiv has gained its popular credentials by calling on the population to arm itself and resist. Just before the war, Volodymyr Zelensky only received 25% of favourable opinions from Ukrainians interviewed between 5 and 13 February 2022 by the International Institute of Sociology in Kyiv, closely followed at 22% by his predecessor, the chocolate magnate Petro Poroshenko, who had signed the Minsk protocol with Russia and its puppets in Donetsk and Lugansk in 2014, recognising the "autonomy" of these two eastern provinces occupied by Putin's mercenaries.

11. More generally, war and the Nation have already been brandished recently as the "fight against the pandemic"<sup>3</sup>, after the one against terrorism. Called upon to side with their own national ruling classes, the poor are summoned to dissolve themselves into national unity and, tomorrow, to die at the front or under the bombs. The Ukrainian population has already had a taste of this, as have the populations of the many countries in civil war in Africa, the Middle and the Far East. The Belarusian population is now under the long-term occupation of Putin's black army. The people of Kazakhstan live in fear that the armoured columns of the Moscow despot will return to assist the local forces of repression. The people of the Sahel are paying the price for the asymmetric

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<sup>3</sup> See: "Dynamics of state capitalism, imperialist competition and the working class condition after the health crisis", Pamphlet no. 7: [https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Booklets/BR7\\_Economie%20et%20CovidENvF%20Site.pdf](https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Booklets/BR7_Economie%20et%20CovidENvF%20Site.pdf)

wars fought by the Islamists and the European powers, France above all. And the list goes on. Meanwhile, the world's proletarians who are not directly affected by the war are paying the price in soaring energy and grain prices. It is important to remember that Ukraine alone accounts for 13% of world wheat exports.

12. To define proletarian politics in a context as unfavourable to class struggle as war is a complex task. Yet, it is necessary that communists start preparing now to feed the discussion on this theme among the most advanced elements of the exploited class. Our positions are known. Workers have no country; they do not defend frontiers of any sort; they fight first of all their own bourgeoisie and all imperialist and colonialist policies of annexation. Workers aim for fraternisation between proletarians in uniform from the opposing camps with the aim of transforming imperialist wars into class war. These cardinal points of revolutionary policy have been elaborated and pursued with determination by the independent workers' movement since its inception. *Mouvement communiste* defends them unreservedly. In the concrete situation of the present war in Ukraine this comes down to a few particular considerations:

11.1) The fight against war is not a fight for the peace of capital. While their appearance is not negative in itself, peace movements pursue objectives of defending the order preceding the conflict. These objectives are not compatible with those of an international class without a country whose aspiration is to sweep away the world of capital with all its frontiers. However, warmongers and peaceniks are not the same. *"Socialists have always condemned war between nations as barbarous and brutal. But our attitude towards war is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace) and of the Anarchists. We differ from the former in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within the country; we understand that war cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and Socialism is created; and we also differ in that we fully regard civil wars, i.e., wars waged by the oppressed class against the oppressing class ... as legitimate, progressive and necessary. ... Marxism is not pacifism. It is necessary, of course, to fight for the speediest termination of the war. But only if a revolutionary struggle is called for, does the demand for "peace" acquire proletarian mean-*

ing. Without a series of revolutions, so-called democratic peace is a philistine utopia.” wrote Lenin in 1915 in *Socialism and War*<sup>4</sup>. And similarly: “The petty-bourgeois viewpoint differs from the bourgeois one (outright justification of the war, outright “defence of the fatherland”, i.e., defence of the interests of one’s own capitalists, defence of their “right” to annexations) in that the petty bourgeois “renounces” annexations, “condemns” imperialism, “demands” from the bourgeoisie that it cease to be imperialistic while keeping within the framework of world-imperialist relations and the capitalist system of economy. Confining himself to this mild, innocuous, wishy-washy declamation, the petty bourgeois, in practice, trails helplessly behind the bourgeoisie, “sympathising” in some things with the proletariat in words, remaining dependent on the bourgeoisie in deeds, unable or unwilling to understand the path leading to the overthrow of the capitalist yoke, the only path that can rid the world of imperialism”, declared Lenin in April 1917 in an article written for *Pravda* called “Blancism”<sup>5</sup>. The worker critique of bourgeois pacifism returns to contest, with proof to support it, the illusion of a universal peace of markets and commodities. This critique must be taken by revolutionaries into the peace movements. “The sentiments of the masses in favour of peace often express incipient protest, anger and consciousness of the reactionary character of the war. It is the duty of all Social-Democrats to utilise these sentiments. They will take a most ardent pan in every movement and in every demonstration on this ground; but they will not deceive the people by conceding the idea that peace without annexations, without the oppression of nations, without plunder, without the germs of new wars among the present governments and ruling classes is possible in the absence of a revolutionary movement.”, as Lenin says further on in *Socialism and War*. The rationality of commodity exchange, of the dictatorship of capital, is not an antidote to war which is on the contrary the pursuit on the terrain of arms of competition between individual capitals, between the states representing them.

<sup>4</sup> *Socialism and War* was published in 1915 and distributed at the Zimmerwald Conference held in Switzerland. This conference was an important step in the split of the revolutionary socialists (naturally opposed to the war) from the warmongering “reformists”.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/s-w/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/pdf/lenin-cw-vol-24.pdf>

Conscious proletarians want nothing to do with borders, functional only to societies divided into ruling classes and oppressed and exploited classes. There is no question therefore of defending such and such a border line. No question either of defending nations or oppressed cultures.

**11.2)** Yet, the struggle against annexations is the indissociable corollary of any proletarian action against war. The oppression of populations by occupying powers harms the blooming of the class struggle because it contributes massively to political unity between the exploited and the bourgeois belonging to the populations subjected to foreign military occupations. National unity always translates into hostility from poor recruits towards the proletarians of the occupying country. “In order that we may have the strength to accomplish the socialist revolution and overthrow the bourgeoisie, the workers must unite more closely and this close union is promoted by the struggle for self-determination, i.e., the struggle against annexations.”, continued Lenin in *The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*<sup>6</sup> from 1916. The unity of proletarians from both camps is the indispensable condition for the struggle against annexations. To make this happen, workers in the occupying country have a duty to lend a hand to their class brothers and sisters in the occupied territory. Analysing the British occupation of Ireland, Karl Marx wrote: “This antagonism [between English and Irish workers] is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation... the most important object of the International Working Men’s Association to hasten the social revolution in England. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent.”, “Letter to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt”, 9 April 1870<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jul/x01.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70\\_04\\_09.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70_04_09.htm)

The reasoning of Marx applied to the war in Ukraine therefore implies that proletarians in Russia and Ukraine fight together against the imperialist war and the occupation of Ukraine, thus against their respective ruling classes, solely responsible for the suffering of the subordinate classes. For that, the proletariat must use its most effective weapons: strikes, sabotage, insurrections and reappropriation.

**11.3)** Fraternisation between proletarians in uniform from both fronts is difficult in the present conditions of the conflict in Ukraine. The troops deployed by Putin are mainly composed of the corps most loyal to the regime, with conscripts playing secondary roles. Professional soldiers acting in small-scale combat units (800 soldiers per tactical battalion), trained in rapid incursions deep behind enemy lines, mercenaries from the “private” Wagner group, the massive deployment of military means which avoid close combat, aerial and naval bombardment, these are the characteristics of the Russian offensive. By this, the Kremlin wants to avoid at any price its forces getting involved in a long war. The call for militarisation of the population by the Kyiv government relies on the capacity of Ukrainians to “fix” the occupation troops with incessant harassment. The demonstration of Russian might does not aim at a prolonged occupation of Ukraine. It furthers the extension of its protectorates in the east along with the “softening up”, even fall of the government in Kyiv to stop Ukraine joining NATO. Some 200,000 men, even well-armed and trained, have little chance keeping down a country of more than 600,000 km<sup>2</sup> and more than 42 million inhabitants. To put it simply, asymmetric war is the only path that the Ukrainian government can resort to, on the condition that the population lines up behind the state and accepts dying for the nation.

The very much flourishing Ukrainian Nazi militias share this perspective and show themselves determined to take the leadership of operations on the ground as they did in 2014, when Russian mercenaries struck in Lugansk and Donetsk. It is obvious that the proletariat in Ukraine has nothing to gain from this patriotic combat whose advocates are no different from Putin. On the other hand, it is not completely

impossible for sectors of the exploited class and inheritors of the democratic Maidan movement of 2013 to try to organise a resistance, armed or not, to the invasion which breaks with the Ukrainian state and its Nazi militias. This perspective is highly improbable but it is the only one that could radically modify the situation because it would strike a terrible blow against the Ukrainian state, would significantly weaken the Moscow regime and would reinforce the opposition of the proletariat to the war in Russia. The destabilisation which would follow in Ukraine and Russia would set up more propitious conditions for the rise of independent workers’ struggles and would send an audible message of political class autonomy to millions of emigrant Ukrainian workers in Europe and Russia as well as, more generally, the world proletariat.

But, for that, returning to the text of Lenin, proletarians must use legal and illegal weapons:

*“While under no circumstances or conditions refraining from utilizing all legal possibilities, however small, for the purpose of organizing the masses and of preaching Socialism, the Social-Democratic parties must break with subservience to legality. “You shoot first, Messieurs the Bourgeoisie”, wrote Engels, hinting precisely at civil war and at the necessity of our violating legality after the bourgeoisie had violated it. The crisis has shown that the bourgeoisie violate it in all countries, even the freest, and that it is impossible to lead the masses to revolution unless an underground organisation is set up for the purpose of advocating, discussing, appraising and preparing revolutionary methods of struggle.”, Lenin, Socialism and War, 1915<sup>8</sup>.*

Brussels, Paris, Prague, 27 February 2022

A neophyte historian's breviary of Leninism<sup>9</sup>

*“After the Revolution of October 1917 and the civil war which followed, the Bolsheviks began to construct a new state and there were no serious disagreements between them. Stalin, who took on in 1922 the functions of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) and the Commissar of the People for Nationalities, proposed to construct the country on the principles of autonomisation, that is to say, giving to the Republics – the future administrative-territorial units – large powers in so far as they adhered to the unified state. Lenin criticised this plan and proposed to make concessions to the nationalists, as they called them at the time – the “independents”. These are the ideas of Lenin on an essentially confederative state structure and on the right of nations to self-determination up to the point of secession which constituted the foundation of the Soviet state: starting in 1922, they were consecrated in the Declaration on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, then, after the death of Lenin, in the Constitution of the USSR of 1924... Bolshevik policy ended up with the emergence of Soviet Ukraine, which, even today, can justly be called the “Ukraine from Vladimir Lenin”. He was the author and architect. This is fully confirmed by documents in the archives, including the severe directives from Lenin on the Donbas,*

*which had been literally squeezed into Ukraine. ... I repeat that in 1922, the USSR was created from the territory of the former Russian Empire.... Modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia, or more precisely, by Bolshevik and Communist Russia. The process began almost immediately after the revolution of 1917, and Lenin and his comrades in arms made it in a manner very insulting to Russia itself – by secession, by tearing off parts of its own historic territories. No one, of course, asked the opinion of the millions of people living there.”*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem* Op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Putin on the birth of modern Ukraine (speech on 22 February 2022)